

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1028
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

UNCLAS STRASBOURG 104

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR.

SUBJECT: MITTERAND IN STRASBOURG

1. SUMMARY: FRANCOIS MITTERAND PAID A LIGHTNING VISIT TO STRASBOURG MAY 21 TO ADDRESS A RALLY OF 2,500 SOCIALISTS FROM THE BAS-RHIN. IN THE COURSE OF HIS ADDRESS AND AN EARLIER INTERVIEW WITH LES DERNIERES NOUVELLES, ALSACE'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER, MITTERAND SAID THAT HE HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT THE FUTURE INTENTIONS OF HIS COMMUNIST COALITION PARTNERS, WAS CONFIDENT OVER THE UPCOMING NANTES SOCIALIST CONGRESS, AND DISMISSED RUMORS ABOUT POSSIBLE ILL HEALTH. THE SOCIALIST LEADER ALSO INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS BEING HELD BEFORE THEIR 1978 SCHEDULE. QUOTE IF THEY WANT TO HAVE THEM (THE ELECTIONS) SOONER, SO MUCH THE BETTER UNQUOTE. END SUMMARY.

2. FRANCOIS MITTERAND, HEAD OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY MADE A BRIEF VISIT TO STRASBOURG MAY 21 TO ADDRESS A RALLY OF 2,500 LOCAL SOCIALISTS, THEIR FIRST LARGE POPULAR MEETING OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STRASB 00104 240956Z

LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN. MITTERAND PROUDLY ACKNOWLEDGED THE PRESENCE ON THE PODIUM OF SEVERAL RECENTLY ELECTED LOCAL OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE LEFTIST MAYOR OF SCHILTIGHEIM, STRASBOURG'S MAJOR SUBURB, AND ADMITTED THAT THE FIGHT FOR THE LEFT HAD ALWAYS BEEN DIFFICULT IN ALSACE. THE SOCIALIST LEADER OUTLINED THE ESSENTIAL CHOICE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY: THE RIGHT TO DECENTRALIZATION AND TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN EACH GROUP

WITHIN THE NATION. THE SOCIALISTS WOULD MAINTAIN CIVIL LIBERTIES SINCE QUOTE THE WAY OF THE SOCIALISTS IS THAT OF DEMOCRACY UNQUOTE. MITTERAND MADE NO DIRECT REFERENCE TO HIS COMMUNIST PARTNERS DURING HIS SPEECH, BUT DID MAKE AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO HIS DIFFICULTIES WITH CERES, THE SOCIALIST PARTY S LEFT WING. THE LARGELY MIDDLE CLASS CROWD RECEIVED MITTERAND S REMARKS WITH ENTHUSIASM.

AFTER THE SPEECH, MITTERAND WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT THE STATE OF HIS HEALTH. THESE REPORTS, HE INDICATED, WERE RIDICULOUS. LET S THE DOCTORS OF MOLIERE MAKE THEIR OWN DIAGNOSIS, HE JOKED, MAKING AN ALLUSION TO THAT PLAYWRIGHT S FAMOUS WORK, ABOUT DOCTORS AND HYPOCHONDRIACS LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE .

3. DURING HIS STORMY FLIGHT IN A PRIVATE PLANE TO STRASBOURG, MITTERAND GAVE LES DERNIERES NOUVELLES, STRASBOURG S MAJOR NEWSPAPER, A WIDE RANGING INTERVIEW, INCLUDING THE STATE OF THE COMMON PROGRAM, PROSPECTS FOR THE PARTY CONGRESS IN NANTES, THE COST OF THE COMMON PROGRAM, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES. MITTERAND WAS ASKED WHETHER HE REMAINED PERSUADED THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY REALLY WANTED TO PARTICIPATE WITH HIM IN A FUTURE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. HE HAD NO REASON, HE REPLIED, TO DOUBT THE INTENTIONS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY RESPECTING THE COMMON PROGRAM. THE POLEMICS ENGAGED IN BY THE PC IN OPPOSITION TO HIS PARTY CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THEIR DESIRE TO ENTER THE ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE POSITION. ON ITS PART, THE SOCIALISTS WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE UNION OF THE LEFT, WITHOUT ALLOWING ITSELF TO BE DISTRACTED FROM THE COURSE OF ACTION WHICH HAS MADE IT THE FIRST PARTY OF FRANCE. ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT THAT THE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STRASB 00104 240956Z

UPCOMING NANTES PARTY CONGRESS COULD BE LESS THAN SERENE IN LIGHT OF THE EFFORTS OF THE CERES WING OF THE PARTY TO PUSH IT MORE LEFTWARD, MITTERAND REMARKED THAT A MONOLITHIC PARTY IS RARELY DEMOCRATIC AND SINCE THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS DEMOCRATIC, IT WILL BE DIVIDED INTO MAJORITY AND MINORITY SEGMENTS. ONE WILL BE ABLE TO SPEAK OF A FRACTURE OR DISUNITY WITHIN THE PARTY ONLY IF PARTY DISCIPLINE WITH RESPECT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS MADE AT THE CONGRESS IS NOT RESPECTED.

4. MITTERAND WAS ASKED TO CLARIFY SOME REMARKS HE HAD MADE IN AN INTERVIEW GIVEN TO JOSEPH KRAFT OF THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE IN WHICH HE IMPLIED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD WANTED TO DO HIM HARM BY PUBLISHING A CALCULATION OF THE COST OF THE COMMON PROGRAM. MITTERAND SAID THAT HE WRITES ALL HIS INTERVIEWS AND THAT WHEN HE RECEIVED KRAFT AT HIS HOME FOR A HALF HOUR, HE HAD NOT GIVEN HIM AN INTERVIEW AND THUS DID NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF BOUND BY THE TERMS OF THE KRAFT ARTICLE. ON A POSSIBLE VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES AND A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, THE SOCIALIST LEADER SAID HE EXPECTS TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES BEFORE

LONG, SINCE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION INTERESTS HIM A GREAT DEAL AND SINCE IT IS FELT THAT SOMETHING FUNDAMENTAL IS PRESENTLY TAKING PLACE THERE. MITTERAND CONCLUDED THE INTERVIEW BY EXPRESSING HIS AMUSEMENT OVER HEARING PRIME MINISTER BARRE AND JACQUES CHIRAC DECLARE, BY TURNS, THAT EACH IS THE CHIEF OF THE MAJORITY. IN HIS OPINION, CHIRAC IS, RELATIVE TO THE GISCARDIENS, IN SUCH A POWERFUL POSITION, THAT HE ISN T REALLY IN ANY DANGER OF BEING OUTDISTANCED BY THEM. BUT MITTERAND DECLARED THAT THIS POWER INTERNECINE STRUGGLE IS NOT REALLY HIS CONCERN SINCE EVERYTHING INDICATES THAT THE LEFT WILL BE IN A POSITION TO WIN THE LEGISLATURES NEXT YEAR.

5. COMMENT: MITTERAND S VISIT HERE WAS A RATHER PRO FORMA AFFAIR WITH NO MAJOR POLICY SURPRISES. ITS INTENTION, CERTAINLY, WAS TO GIVE RECOGNITION TO A REGIONAL LEFTIST ORGANIZATION WHICH HAD MADE SOME STRIKING GAINS DURING THE RECENT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE NOT ON THE ORDER OF THE DRAMATIC INROADS UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STRASB 00104 240956Z

THE LEFT MADE IN OTHER SECTIONS OF FRANCE. THE MAJORITY GETS ITS TURN AT BAT IN STRASBOURG DURING PRIME MINISTER BARRE S VISIT MAY 26. END COMMENT.ROMINE

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